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THE HARVEST

AN ALLEGORY

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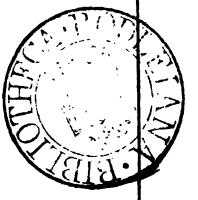
THE HARVEST.

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THE HARVEST.

An Allegory.



BY

MRS. FREDERIC GRANVILLE.

EDITED BY THE

VERY REV. WALTER FARQUHAR HOOK, D.D.,
F.R.S.,
DEAN OF CHICHESTER.

"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."
Psalm cxvi. 5.

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PREFACE.

THERE are persons whose minds are so constituted, that they are incapable of receiving truth when it is set before them in abstract propositions; a fact which is especially applicable to religious truth, since religious truth addresses itself not less to the affections than to the intellect. Minds so constituted are more easily approached through the analogies of things, and by illustrations drawn from the occurrences of daily life. It is to this circumstance, doubtless, that we may attribute

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the frequency of those parables in the New Testament by which the light of truth was brought to bear on the awakened soul by our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

This fact has forced itself of late years upon the attention of many who have desired to train the youthful mind in the ways of morality, and to interest it in the truths of the gospel. We may add, that Allegories, while they instruct the young, afford amusement, by reminding them of their juvenile studies, to the well-informed. Dr. Johnson was not ashamed to acknowledge the pleasure he found in the perusal of Children's Books. It was under this impression that the following Allegory was composed by the writer for the instruction of her children, and it is in the belief, that what is written in a style so simple and graphic

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may afford entertainment to children of a larger growth, that its publication has been advised.

W. F. H.

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THE HARVEST.

CHAPTER I.

"Life is real! Life is earnest!
And the grave is not its goal:
'Dust thou art, to dust returnest,'
Was not spoken of the soul.

"Let us then be up and doing,
With a heart for any fate;
Still achieving, still pursuing,
Learn to labour and to wait."

LONGFELLOW.

"What are these which are arrayed in white robes? and whence came they?"—*Rev.* vii. 13.

I WAS dreaming, and in my dream a man whose face was lit up with a smile, and whose appearance denoted him at peace with all the world, stood near and thus addressed me:—

"Have you any wish to see the kingdom of that wise and powerful King who has all

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nations under His feet? If you so desire, and will come with me, I will show you how His people are governed."

I looked steadily at the man, and feeling attracted by his kindly expression, I rose up at once to follow him.

As we journeyed along I inquired of my guide respecting this great King who was so wondrously mighty.

"He is indeed wonderful and all-powerful," he replied. "All we hear and all we see are His. He has but to command, and the sun, the moon, and the stars would cease to shine. By one word of His He could destroy this fair and beautiful earth whereon He permits His subjects to dwell. But notwithstanding His power, He is most tender and merciful to all who love and serve Him.

"Many hundred years ago, grieved to see in what wickedness His people were plunged, the King sent His only Son to them, that He might reason with them and try to turn their

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hearts. For a long time He strove with them, but they were hard-hearted and obstinate, and even refused to believe He was the King's Son.

"That all these poor men and women should be for ever debarred from entering His Father's kingdom so touched the Son, that He offered Himself as a willing sacrifice for them, and the King promised that from that time forth, through the mediation of His Son, all who called upon Him, and prayed to Him, should be spared from the punishment prepared for the disobedient."

We had now reached one of the palaces of the great King, and my guide told me to enter. Upon doing so, a lovely sight met my gaze. It was a magnificent building, and in it was assembled a large concourse of people, and in the midst of them were a number of children, some quite infants, and a venerable old man was in the act of giving each child a handful of seed. Having done this, the old man sprinkled

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them with water, whereupon their garments became as white as snow. He then blessed them in the King's name, and prayed to Him to watch over and protect them, and keep them from all temptation. When his prayer was concluded, an organ pealed forth, and all the multitude joined in singing the praises of their glorious Sovereign.

"Praise, O praise our Lord and King,
Hymns of adoration sing;
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

"Praise Him that He made the sun
Day by day his course to run;
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

"Praise Him that He gave the rain
To mature the swelling grain;
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure.

"Glory to our bounteous King!
Glory let Creation sing;
For His mercies still endure,
Ever faithful, ever sure."

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A bright light shining through the painted windows fell upon the heads of the children, and I could almost fancy it a special ray sent by the King to show His willingness to watch over them.

Anxious to know the meaning of this strange sight, I turned to my companion and begged him to tell me the reason of these children being there, and whether they came often to receive the seed which they all seemed to value so highly.

"No," said he; "they can only receive the precious seed once in their lives. This the good King gives to every child that is brought here to receive it. He will also give it to any one, however old, who has not already received it. Now if these children wish to serve and please the King, they take the seed to a piece of land which every subject has allotted to him in the King's dominions. They there sow it and tend it, keeping guard over it that nothing shall come near to

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harm it. By-and-by, with the aid of the good King, the seed sown will spring up and become beautiful wheat, and at some time during its growth, the King will send an angel to see whether it be ripe, and if so, the angel will reap it and carry the happy subject to another kingdom belonging to the great King, far away from this abode of sin and sorrow. In those distant realms there is endless day; all is bright, all is pure, and free from spot or sin: no parting from those we love; but joy, joy for ever. The happy people who are thither removed, live always near our Lord the King, and are always singing His praises. Ah! it is bliss beyond description.

"We know not, oh! we know not,
What joys await us there,
What radiancy of glory,
What bliss beyond compare.

It is sad indeed to think how any of the people can do aught else than strive to reach that fair and beautiful land."

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"Surely," said I, "all the King's subjects go there. What can be easier than to sow this seed, to watch over it, and wait till it is the King's pleasure to reap the wheat?"

My companion, turning to me with a sad look, replied—

"You will soon see that it is far otherwise. But first of all I must tell you that the King's subjects have a terrible enemy who is always on the watch, and who wanders about doing all the mischief he can. In many places where naturally the land would be easily cultivated, he heaps up rocks and stones to prevent the wheat springing up. If he is once allowed to enter a field he will do an immense amount of harm, and cause endless misery, therefore a constant guard and unceasing vigilance are necessary. He sometimes entices people away from their fields, and then quite roots up all the wheat, or cuts it down so close, that you could hardly tell there had ever been anything growing there."

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"But," said I with amazement, "you tell me the King is all-powerful, then why, as He is so mighty, does He not destroy this enemy?"

"He could destroy him if He pleased," replied my guide, "for with Him all things are possible; but the King has seen fit that His subjects should be tried in this manner, as He wishes to prove them, and to know what is in their hearts; whether they will keep His commandments, and are really worthy of the joys He has prepared for them. For that reason He allows the enemy to tempt as many people away from Him as he can, and all that are so enticed away are lost to the King, who promises the beautiful land only to those who are faithful to Himself."

"But what good can be obtained by following the temptations of this wicked one? Has he too prepared a goodly country for the reception of his followers?"

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"On the contrary: when they leave this land they go to endless misery; they are for ever shut out of the everlasting land, and are cast into a fiery furnace. I see by your look you wonder that any one can do otherwise than cultivate the land and watch the growth of the wheat. Wait till you have seen some of the inhabitants. Many of them, you will find, do not believe in the King, or in His power to do them good or evil. Others are too much taken up with amusements and the cares and business of life; they are so wrapped up in earthly pursuits that they will not spare a few minutes daily to attend to their wheat. While some are dancing and making merry, wasting their time in idle and wicked pleasures, and others are eager after business, trying to make themselves a great name on earth by amassing riches, the Wicked One creeps into their unguarded fields, and commits great havoc among their crops."

Whilst pondering over what my companion

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had said, and hardly able to realize the folly of people who for a few short years of pleasure would thus throw away endless happiness, I noticed two lovely children, evidently a brother and sister, who, having received the seed, had just left the palace, and I thought how much I should like to see how they would fare; whether or not they would persevere in cultivating the seed they had just obtained. As I drew near to follow them, the little girl, looking up half timidly in the boy's face, commenced talking to him.

"Oh, Christian," said she, "we will begin directly we reach our fields; we will work very hard at first, and then all will go so easily; but we must be very careful to keep our beautiful white clothes clean and free from spots. I think I should break my heart if mine were soiled. And, brother, did you hear the King's general say, that whenever we are in need of anything we are to kneel down and pray to the great King, and He will give

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us all we ask? We are to call Him 'Our Father,' and He will watch over us, and keep us from every evil."

"Yes, Agnes," said the boy; "and he also told me that I ought always to be thinking about you, and trying to help you; that I must not be longing to run off with other boys to idle away my time, and that I am even more bound than other brothers to set you a good example, for as our dear father and mother are both gone to that happy land, we two must keep together until we are allowed to join them."

"Ah," cried Agnes, "that will indeed be a happy time for us! I wonder if our dear mother knows of our happiness to-day? When we lived so far away from any palace of the great King, how she used to hope and pray that we might one day, ere long, receive the precious seed! How well I remember the evening when the angel came for her! Her field of wheat was so ripe that the setting sun made it look like gold."

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The pair had now reached the end of their journey.

As I passed through the country I noticed that some fields were widely different from others: some had very few rocks or stones that required removal; others were full of weeds, and would want constant attention to keep them from entirely choking up the wheat. Occasionally there was a plot of ground which seemed to require but little to be done to it; this, however, was an exception. But still I thought that there was scarcely one piece of land that could not, with a little perseverance, be got into good order. Above all things, constant watching would be necessary to prevent the growth of the smallest weed, for should one appear and be allowed to grow to any size, others would quickly follow, and an immense amount of labour would then be required to root them up.

But to return to the two children. They had now reached their fields, and Agnes

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neither looked to the right nor left, but at once commenced clearing away the stones from her plot. Not so, however, with Christian. For some time he watched his sister, but did not seem at all inclined to set her the good example he had talked about. At last he did make a beginning, and I was much surprised to see how heavy all the stones in his field appeared to be. As his sister had so easily removed hers, I expected he would not find greater difficulty, for I thought a brother and sister would surely have the same kind of land allotted to them.

"Well, I can do no more to-day," he cried, and at the same moment some boys who were passing called out to him to join them in a game of play. Christian felt he ought not to go, and leave his work in the unfinished state in which it was, but the boys began to laugh at him, and said he was afraid of his sister.

"That I am not, as you shall see," he ex-

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claimed with indignation as he bounded off to follow them.

Now Christian all the time felt he was doing wrong. He knew he had not done a good day's work. "But then," he argued to himself, "what does it signify? I have so many days before me, and I can easily work a little harder after I have enjoyed my play." Above all things he did not like being laughed at by his companions, so he allowed himself to be drawn away, if only for a little while.

Poor Agnes looked sorrowfully after him, and then went on with her work; but as the time passed and he did not return, she began to feel very uneasy about him, and at last set off to seek him.

When Christian saw his sister coming towards him, with her face looking very pale and sorrowful, he immediately left his play-fellows, and taking her hand, promised he would at once return with her, never to leave his work again till it was finished.

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"But look, Christian, at that spot on your clothes," exclaimed Agnes, bursting into tears. "When will you ever be able to wash it out?"

Christian looked, and was surprised to find there was a spot—very small—but still it was there. He too wept bitter tears over it, and I could see that as the tears fell on the spot, it appeared to grow fainter. I could not tell why, but it certainly was not so dark as when I first noticed it.

So the two children returned to their fields; Agnes all the way urging her brother to persevere, and not to be dismayed at the work before him. I was glad to see that Christian took his sister's advice, and at once set to work in earnest to remove the stones.

I had before observed that there was a great deal to do in both fields before they would be in a fit state to have the seed sown in them. The little girl, however, laboured steadily on: every morning before going to her daily employment she was at work, and again before

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retiring to rest at night. I also noticed that during their hours of play she would slip away from her companions to labour in her field; and though it was often hard work, she seemed to delight in it, and the stones were rapidly disappearing.

One day while working, Christian came to a very large stone, and tried hard to remove it, but it resisted all his efforts. At last he sat down disheartened.

"Agnes, this is hard work," he said. "I shall never be able to remove this stone. Do you think you could do it for me?"

"Would that I could," said she. "But you know it is impossible. I will tell you what we can both do, and that is, we can kneel down and pray to our great and good Father to help you."

Then the little girl knelt down, and turning her fair face upward, she began—

"Our Father, who dwellest so very far away, and who art yet near enough to hear

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every prayer Thy children may offer to Thee, hear us now, and help us to overcome the difficulties that are placed in our way.

"Oh, help us, Lord, each hour of need
Thy heav'nly succour give;
Help us in thought, in word, and deed,
Each hour on earth we live.

"And now, Christian," continued the little girl, "if you set to work and make up your mind not to leave off till you have conquered the difficulty, I am sure you will find the stone easier to remove."

When Christian again returned to his labour in earnest, the stone began to yield, and at last it was rolled triumphantly away.

"There, Agnes, it is gone at last," said he, as he stood wiping his forehead, for he had really worked very hard; "now we may go home to bed. I feel so happy, happier than I have ever felt before; and see, the stain on my clothes is nearly gone!"

"Ah," said Agnes, "how merciful, how

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loving is our Father! Let us sing His praise as we walk home.

"Light of Lights! with morning shine,
Lift on us Thy light divine,
And let charity benign
Breathe on us her balm.

Light of Lights! when falls the even,
Let it close on sin forgiven;
Fold us in the peace of heaven,
Shed a holy calm."

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CHAPTER II.

Blest are the pure in heart,
For they shall see our God;
The secret of the Lord is theirs,
Their soul is Christ's abode.

He to the lowly soul
Doth still Himself impart,
And for His dwelling and His throne
Chooseth the pure in heart.

Lord, we Thy presence seek,
May ours this blessing be;
Give us a pure and lowly heart,
A temple meet for Thee.

"His compassions fail not; they are new every morning."—*Lam.* iii. 22, 23.

"Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth."—*Eccles.* xii. 1.

Some time afterwards I returned to the fields of Agnes and Christian, who were then no longer children. Christian had grown into a

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fine handsome young man; but still there was in his face the same undecided look I had noticed when he was a child, which made me fear that, though he might work hard for some days together, he would be easily led away by other young men to join in their amusements, and become so engrossed in them as entirely to forget his field.

It was a pleasant sight to see Agnes hard at work in her field. She had sown the seed, and it had sprung up a little; but I was much astonished to see in one part of the field a great many pieces of rock and stone left, and near them no wheat seemed to be growing. I saw, too, that Agnes was constantly trying to clear away these stones, and though she often worked very hard she did not succeed so well as I expected. One day as she was sitting down and looking mournfully at the corner of her field, the King's general passed by, and seeing Agnes he stopped, for he knew her well, and loved her as if she were his own child.

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"What ails you, Agnes?" said he. "Are you weeping because your brother so often leaves you?"

"Not altogether for that, sir; but partly on account of my field. In every other part the wheat is springing up and looking fresh and green, but in this corner none will grow."

"The reason of that, my child, is because you have left all those rocks and stones, which naturally hinder the seed from springing up."

"I am sure I have worked hard," said Agnes. "Early and late I have been labouring in my field, but it is no use; do what I will, I cannot clear away the stones in that corner."

"Listen to me, Agnes," said the old man. "I fear, like many others who have naturally a wish to please our great Lord and King, you have been led into committing a grave error, namely, in believing that, by your own unaided exertions, you could do all that was requisite to your field. My child, watch and

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pray, lest you enter into temptation. Watch always; but, above all, do not neglect to pray, that you may have strength to watch. Remember that, through the mediation of the great Prince who died to make atonement for us, you can obtain all you ask, provided our King knows it is good for you. Without our Father's help you could not raise the smallest stone—nay, not even a grain of sand; but, with His help, all things are possible. Agnes, I daily see many fields which make me very sad, and I would there were more like yours. But with all this, you are too proud of what you have done with your own strength; you do not kneel down often enough and say,—'O, great and good King, Thou alone art able to move these stones. I am weak, and utterly unable to do anything without Thy aid; strengthen me, O Lord, and, above all things, renew in me an humble spirit.'"

Agnes looked somewhat abashed. What the good general told her she felt was exactly

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the case. She had grown proud of her field; she could see how much better it was cultivated and kept than her neighbours', and latterly she had worked on, feeling so confident she could do all that was right, that she had neglected to pray to the great King for His help in her work.

"How much I wish I had thought of all this before!" said Agnes. "Now perhaps the angel may come to take me, and finding my field so backward, no wheat in it to reap, he will pass over it and leave me to the Wicked One. I thought when I first saw this spot on my clothes"—and she held up the hem of her white garment and showed the general a tiny spot—"I could have cried my eyes out; and now I am sure it every day gets darker. What shall I do? what shall I do?"

"First of all, my child, you must not give way to despair. Sitting here and crying will certainly not aid you in cleansing the spot from your garment, or in clearing away the

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stones from your field. There may be hard work before you, but you must not shrink from it. You must never rest till you have removed these stones, till you have rooted up these weeds. Each hour they grow stronger, each day they increase, and the labour of removing them will daily become greater. Our King has promised to all his subjects that, though they may neglect their fields to such an extent that it would not be possible to discover there had ever been any seed planted, though the stones and rocks be piled many feet high on their lands, yet if they will return and try to cultivate their fields, He will help them if they pray to Him, believing in His Son, for whose sake He does this. No one, however, must trust to being able to return at some future day to cultivate the land. Any day, any hour, when least expected, the angel may come to see if the wheat is ripe, and woe to that subject who shall be found absent, engaged in seeking wicked pleasures and amusements, for

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most assuredly will the Evil One carry him away to everlasting punishment.

"And now, Agnes, I must leave you. Pray earnestly; pray without ceasing, even while you are working, and you will then find the stones much easier of removal. Remember, too, when you are away from your field you are to be constantly thinking of the King, and whenever you have a few seconds to yourself, if you offer up a silent prayer for the welfare of your field, He himself will condescend to watch over it."

The old man then blessed her and departed.

A short time elapsed, and I was curious to see what progress Agnes had made. I found her as usual hard at work in her field, and ever and anon she sang in a low, clear voice—

"I need Thy presence ev'ry passing hour:
What but Thy grace can foil the Tempter's power?
Who like Thyself, my guide and stay can be?
Through cloud and sunshine, Lord, abide with me."

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I could see there was already a great difference; nearly all the large stones were removed, and I doubted not but that in a few days the land would be entirely clear.

And Christian, where was he all this time? The last day or two, I noticed, he had been several times in his field, but he looked both moody and morose, and hardly addressed a word to his sister. Every day his field seemed to grow fuller of rocks and stones, and I also noticed many very ugly weeds springing up instead of wheat. I turned and asked my guide how they came there.

"Those weeds which you see were sown by the Wicked One: he plants them wherever he finds an unguarded field, for he is ever on the watch to do mischief. They ought to have been rooted up long ago, when it would have been easy to have done so. Now it will be hard work indeed."

It was nearly sunset, and Agnes was about to go home; Christian too threw down his

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tools and prepared to follow her. It was not often he gave her an opportunity of saying anything to him, so she began at once.

"Christian, dear, why do you neglect your work so much? If you would set your mind to it, and pray for help, you would find all go so smoothly, and you yourself would feel more peaceful and happy than I am sure you have done for a long time."

"I am sick of work, and I'll just tell you what I shall do. I shall not work at my field for a short time. After a rest I shall come back fresh to work, and you will see my wheat grow up in no time so high above my neighbours who go plodding on every day, that you will hardly know my field again."

"Hush, Christian; I cannot bear to hear you talk in that light manner. And pray tell me what you will do if the angel comes to reap your wheat while you are away—perhaps in one of those big cities I hear of, where so much that is wicked is going on?

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Can you say to the angel, 'Wait a little while; in another week or so I will go back and cultivate my land, and then you may come—I shall be quite ready then'?"

Christian did not answer, so Agnes continued:—

"What the great King wishes us to do seems so easy, that it is a marvel to me how any one can do otherwise than follow His commandments. He places us here in a fair and beautiful land, and tells us that all He requires of us is to cultivate the seed He gives us: that if we will only do so to the best of our ability, He will remove us in a few short years to another land more beautiful than we can picture to ourselves—where there will be no Wicked One to tempt us, and no reaping angel to carry away those we love. In that land we shall have one long, never-ending day of happiness! Ah, brother, the thought of that happy land, and gratitude to the great King, ought to make us work hard and strive

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to resist temptation however great in order to please Him. All we need do is to labour on, and think only of the joys and happiness that will one day be ours."

"I know all that, and a great deal more," said Christian, pettishly; "but I must say you expect me to do a little too much. You seem to think I am to be constantly in my field. Work and watch, that is all you would have me do, whilst I see hundreds of other men who manage to cultivate their fields going about amusing themselves, and who actually go into those terrible cities you speak of with so much horror. I dare say if you were to look in their fields you would find they are as well kept as yours is, only you are always talking and making such a fuss about it. You seem to forget, too, that I have other things that must be attended to, and which I suppose our King approves of. When they are finished I have but little time each day to devote to my field, and none to amuse myself as other men do."

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"Believe me, brother, you cannot serve two masters. If once you give yourself up to the Wicked One, the great King will disown you. You cannot trifle with Him by one day serving Him, and the next day neglecting your field."

Just then some of Christian's friends who were passing called to him to join them. I saw Agnes' eyes turn towards her brother with a pleading look, but he shouted to them that he would join them in a few minutes. Then turning to Agnes, he said—

"I really cannot put up with it any longer. You are always finding fault with me, and wanting me to do ten times more than I need; so I am off. You are quite able to take care of yourself; you have told me as much many times, so you had better look out for some one who will like listening to you better than I do."

Agnes sat down by the side of the road and buried her face in her hands.

"O, Christian," she cried, "come back, darling—come back. I will never talk to you

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in the same way again, only do not leave me all alone."

He had now bounded after his companions, and Agnes could hear their loud, harsh laughter and cheers, no doubt in consequence of Christian having joined them. She knelt down and prayed very earnestly that the King would be merciful and not yet send the angel for Christian, but would grant him time to return to his field before it was too late.

"All alone did I say I was? No, I am never alone. My Father is always near me—is always watching over me."

And the poor girl rose up and went home sorrowfully repeating—

"Abide with me from morn to eve,
For without Thee I cannot live;
Abide with me when night is nigh,
For without Thee I dare not die."

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CHAPTER III.

New ev'ry morning is the love
Our wak'ning and uprising prove;
Through sleep and darkness safely brought,
Restored to life, and power, and thought.

New mercies each returning day
Hover around us when we pray;
New treasures still of countless price
God will provide for sacrifice.

"God that giveth the increase."—1 *Cor.* iii. 7.

When poor Agnes had retired from sight, I turned to my guide and told him how much I should like to see one of those great cities where the service of the great King was so much neglected, and which Agnes had referred to with such horror. We accordingly started for one of the largest in the King's dominions.

As we journeyed along I observed how beautiful in many places the country was, and

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the thought often passed through my mind, "What could any one desire more than to live in the midst of so much loveliness, tending the fields and getting the wheat ready for harvest?" What more, indeed, could any one require? Yet as I passed along I saw many men and women, and children too, who seemed idling away their precious time: others, I could hear, were talking of nothing but how they could accumulate wealth. This, too, astonished me, as I had understood that they could not take the riches they set so much store by into that brighter kingdom where all must wish to go, even if they did not strive to do so by endeavouring to please the King. I then inquired if those who were delivered over to the Wicked One took their riches with them to that terrible place of destruction. In reply I was told that those who left this world for either eternal bliss or eternal misery, took nothing with them, and that so far from wealth and worldly distinctions benefiting

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them with the Great King, His Son, when asked who was the greatest person in His Father's kingdom, had pointed to a little child, and said, "Whosoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom." All this made me marvel still more at the foolishness and perverseness of people who received so many gifts, and yet would do nothing in return for them.

One day in every seven was set apart for the special service of the King, and during this day those who wished to please Him passed most of their time in their fields in prayer, abstaining from all work. To many it seemed a day of rest and peace; others treated it lightly, continuing their usual employments, and amusing themselves as they felt inclined.

As we passed along I also noticed several fields of wheat which in the distance looked splendid, but about which, when I approached nearer, there was something wrong. My

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companion saw I was astonished at one field in particular. It appeared from a distance to be covered with remarkably fine wheat, but when quite close to it, if the wheat was carefully examined, it was not the same as the true wheat. None of the stones, moreover, had been removed from the ground, but this wheat had sprung up notwithstanding, and was so tall as to hide the mass of weeds that was growing amongst it.

"That wheat," said my guide, "has not sprung from seed given by the King. You will see quantities of it, alas! growing everywhere. The people obtain this wheat from false generals, who go about pretending they are appointed by the King; but in truth they are impostors, and use their best endeavours to lead men away from Him. They give their followers seed which looks perhaps, to some persons, like the real seed. It is easily planted; it does not require the stones to be removed from the land, and soon springs up to such a height

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that it hides all the weeds which grow luxuriantly with it. They imagine they can deceive the King. Foolish people! they had far better leave the land totally uncared for, than turn to such expedients as these. When the angel appears, this wheat will shrivel up and die in an instant, leaving nought but stones and weeds. Alas! the fate of the owner of such a field is eternal misery!"

We hurried on from this field, and soon after entered a small village where we remained several days, during which I made acquaintance with many of the inhabitants. One old man, named Gabriel, particularly attracted my notice. He must have been above eighty years of age. His hair was as white as snow, and his face plainly showed he was happy, and at peace with those around him. His white garment, too, seemed as if no stain had ever sullied its purity. I often watched his tottering steps, which, both early and late, were always directed to his field. His great

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delight seemed to be in taking care of his wheat. Now and then he would discover a weed, and then he would at once set to work to root it up. His field seemed to me like pure gold; there did not appear to be one bad ear in it, nor was there a bare spot in any part.

All who saw old Gabriel and his field knew that the angel would before long come for him, and he himself was always longing for the time when it should please the King to send for him. He used often to exclaim—"Hark! I hear the sound of the angel's wings." And then, when all was quiet, he would humbly cry—"Not my will, but Thine be done."

The angel came at last, far more suddenly than any one expected.

The day before we left the village, Gabriel went as usual to his field, and as he had now become very weak it was as much as he could do to reach it. The morning was bright and clear, and the old man sat quietly down to

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watch his wheat. All at once he started up, exclaiming, "He comes! he comes! how good and gracious is our King! Oh, Lord, be merciful unto Thy servant, for Thy dear Son's sake."

His time in the earthly kingdom had indeed come to a close. The old man's eyes were fixed with a calm and happy look upon one spot in his field; I turned to see at what he gazed, and beheld an angel in glory descending slowly. He reaped the golden and beautiful wheat with his shining sickle, then gently touching the old man, said, "Thy Father, the King, says unto thee, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord.'"

Happy old man! he was now receiving the full reward of all his patient toil and watching.

In the little village in which Gabriel had lived, he was deeply mourned by both rich and poor, who all loved and admired him.

I must linger no longer amongst scenes

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like these, but relate what I saw and heard in the great city I had been so anxious to visit.

Hark, hark! my soul, angelic songs are swelling
O'er earth's green fields and ocean's wave-beat shore;
How sweet the truths those blessed strains are telling
Of that new life where sin shall be no more!

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CHAPTER IV.

There is no flock, however watched and tended,
But one dead lamb is there;
There is no fireside, howsoe'er defended,
But has one vacant chair.

Let us be patient; these severe afflictions
Not from the ground arise;
But oftentimes celestial benedictions
Assume this dark disguise.

"The harvest is past, the summer is ended, and we are not saved."—*Jer.* viii. 20.

A DAY'S journey from the village where Gabriel had lived, brought us to the gates of the city. We entered, and I wandered about for a long time gazing at all the wonders that met my eye. At every turn I saw something new—something more splendid than I had seen before. On all sides rose stately palaces, magnificent buildings, with their appropriate

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adornments of glittering fountains, brilliant gardens, and statues of whitest marble. It was some time before I was sufficiently accustomed to the noise and bustle to be able to look about me to see what the inhabitants were doing. I had observed there were some palaces for the great King of the same kind as the one I had entered when Agnes and Christian had received the seed for their fields. But considering the thousands of human beings there seemed to be in the city, the palaces would have been full if even one quarter of the people had gone to pray to the King and sing His praises. Many of the people in the streets had no vestige of their white garments left, or they had so completely covered them over that they could not be seen.

"Then all these people," said I to my companion, "will be delivered over to the Wicked One? There seem to me very few amongst them who wear white garments, and I am sure none of them can have much time to attend to

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their fields, they all seem so engrossed by their occupations."

"Nay," said he, "you are hasty in condemning all. Many, I grant you, never give the great King one moment's consideration; but at the same time there are, I am thankful to say, very many who are ever snatching a few minutes to cultivate their fields; ever praying that they may be watched and guarded in their absence. You must remember that no honest amusement is displeasing to the great King, so long as it does not interfere with the cultivation of the fields. The great danger is that people may become so much engrossed in pleasure as to forget everything except present gratification, so that each day it becomes more difficult to return to the cultivation of their fields."

We were just then standing at the crowded corner of a street, and I noticed a poor woman who was sitting on a door-step, and whose dress gave evidence of having once been hand-

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some, but it was now torn and covered with mud. Her face was pale and haggard; her eyes were deeply sunk in her head, and she looked in the last stage of illness. She held her head between her hands, and every now and then a distressing cough shook her whole frame. One or two passers-by offered her money, but she would not take it. Presently a woman dressed in a shining white garment, and having the sweetest face I had ever beheld, approached her. The poor creature started to her feet on seeing her, and almost screamed—

"Why will you follow me? I do not want to listen to you. What am I to you, that you dog my steps wherever I go?"

"I am come to save you from yourself, Esther," said the woman with the white garment. "I will not, if any power of mine can prevent it, allow you in your despair to give yourself up to the Wicked One. Come home with me; you know I will clothe you,

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nurse you, feed you; if you will only come with me I will not upbraid you; and, if you still wish it, when you are quite strong, you can again leave me."

"No, no; leave me now," she cried again. "In a few more days the Wicked One will have carried me off, and then you——"

She did not finish the sentence, but with a cry of pain fell forward on her face, worn out no doubt by exhaustion and want. The gentle woman who had been talking to her, called for assistance, and had her conveyed to her own house. Here the poor suffering creature was tenderly laid on a bed, and I could see the kind attentive nurse, whose name I found was Agatha, hastening about preparing little delicacies for the poor invalid, who had gradually recovered her senses.

"Now, Esther," she said, "you must resign yourself into my care. There, you see you cannot even raise yourself in bed."

The poor woman having made an effort to

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rise, sank back on the pillows and said nothing; her energy seemed worn out, and she gave herself up to her kind and patient nurse. Feeling interested in the pair I had thus singled out, I determined to watch them. For many days I noticed that Agatha never mentioned the name of the King to the invalid. I also noticed that at the back of her house she had a plot of land which she was carefully cultivating, watching eagerly the growth of the wheat, which was looking beautifully green and fresh. One day Agatha was sitting very attentively reading a book by Esther's bedside, for she was still too weak to sit up, when Esther turned round, and fixing her large sunken eyes upon her, said—"What are you reading?"

"I am reading the book of the laws of our great King. It also contains the life of His Son during the time He visited His subjects in this kingdom."

"Oh yes; I remember a long time ago hearing all about it. When I was quite a child, too,

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I remember one of the King's generals gave me some seed; but though I planted it, and did try for a long time to cultivate the field, I found I never had time to attend to it properly; I was always so busy. When I grew up I married, and my husband once laughed at me when I asked him if he ever minded his field. So gradually I forgot all about the seed, having made up my mind that some day or other the wicked enemy would come and carry me off. I was happy enough in those days. I loved my husband very dearly. We were rich, and had two lovely children. One was strong and healthy, and gave me no trouble; but the other was always sickly and delicate. The latter, the younger of the two, was a lovely child, and from the very first I feared the angel would come for him before he grew up. You will wonder, perhaps, wicked as I was, that I cared to see the children received the King's seed; but I took care that as infants they should go to one of the King's palaces to receive it. My

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first-born, as he grew up, treated it much in the same way I had done, or perhaps even worse; and as his father always laughed and sneered at him, he soon gave up attending at all to his field. My little one, on the contrary, almost from the time he could speak and walk, would be always thinking of his field, and striving to keep away everything from it that might hinder the seed from growing. When his brother threw stones in his field the child would say nothing, but instantly set to work to clear them away. Very soon the wheat sprung up; I could see it grow and ripen, and oh, Agatha, I cannot bear to think of that night—it was the beginning of all my troubles! My darling was lying peacefully on my lap, when he woke up suddenly and said, 'Mother, did you hear something in my field?'

"'No, my child!' said I; 'it was only fancy. Try and go to sleep again.'

"I tried to rock him to sleep, for I feared

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the angel was coming; but he cried out, 'Yes, yes, I am right! Oh, mother, I see him all in shining white clothes. He is singing so sweetly that the King is pleased my wheat is so ripe, and he will carry me in his arms to the happy land. Mother, you will follow me, will you not?'

"I knew the angel had come. I knew he had touched my child, and was taking him away to a land where I shall never go."

Here Esther was stopped by a violent fit of coughing. Agatha propped her up with pillows, and would not allow her to speak for some time. Presently she said—

"I should like to tell you what my life has been since my boy was taken from me. As I told you, I had been very happy; my life had been a joyous existence, though sometimes it used to flash across me we were living a very wicked life, having no thought or care for the great King. Now the things I had most cared for, the pleasures which had been my

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great delight, seemed to weary rather than amuse me. I had a longing for something—I knew not what. I had not, however, much time for such thoughts. Any good intentions or wishes I might have had, were always stopped by those about me, who laughed at me. I know it is on your lips to say, 'Surely, when your child was taken away from you, begging you to follow him, you altered your course of life?'

"For a few days after he was taken, I was like a mad woman. I can remember nothing. I was wrapped up in that child. For weeks I had waited on him, nursed him, watched his little ways and listened to his baby talk as he grew up; and he was taken away from me! How cruel it was, I kept crying to the great King; why could He not have left me my treasure? There were thousands of other children; why was my child to be singled out?

"No one came to tell me I ought not to

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repine at the King's decrees, and so I hardened my heart. After a time, when my grief became less violent, I plunged deeper and deeper into the gaieties around me. I told you my child's death was the beginning of all my troubles; and so it was, though many years elapsed before the actual climax came. I cannot tell you all the trifling circumstances which intervened. I must skip over several years.

"My other boy had grown up, and he and his father were much together. The latter was terribly changed: formerly he was always kind and good to me, but now he had become gloomy and morose, and seemed to hate the sight of me. I could see that something was on his mind, and very shortly afterwards I found out what it was. Like a thunderbolt it fell on me. We were ruined. My husband had lost everything he possessed. We, who all our lives had been accustomed to have all that wealth could procure, suddenly found ourselves without

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bread to eat—without a house to shelter us. I shudder to tell you what followed. My husband, desperate on account of the loss he had sustained, left me, and only a few days afterwards I heard he had been taken away. Whither? Ah! who shall dare to say whither? I could hear nothing of my son for a long time, and I was anxious to find him, as I feared he might be in want.

"At last he returned to me, but he looked so ill I hardly knew him. I had enough to keep me from starving for some time, thanks to the bounty of some kind friends, so we made our plans: we had little enough to live on, but my son promised me he would be good to me and never leave me. I hoped that perhaps even in our extreme poverty I might be almost happier than I had been for many years preceding. I determined when I had time that I would try and find my lost field, and see what could be done towards cultivating my wheat. But my good intentions were all

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frustrated. One day my son went out, taking with him the little money I had, and promising to return shortly. I have never seen him since. I waited and hoped for a few days, and was then turned out of our house, to wander about from place to place. When you first saw me I was nearly starved. I had determined not to eat anything, but to wait till the Wicked One came for me. All you said to me made me the more hardened, and I tried, as you know, to get away from you. You at last discovered me on the door-step, and I can remember nothing more till I awoke and found myself here."

The recital of all her troubles and trials was too much for the poor woman, and she burst into sobs. When she was a little calmer Agatha said to her—

"My dear Esther, do you not feel very thankful to the great King that He has so mercifully preserved you from the Wicked One, and left you time to prepare your field,

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to enable you to rejoin your lost child in that kingdom where there is no parting and no sorrow?"

Esther gazed at Agatha with a look of reproach.

"Are you mocking me, that you talk to such as me of the King's glorious kingdom? Ah! no; I have forfeited all right to that long ago. I have no strength left to work in my field."

"The King can give you strength if you pray earnestly to Him for it. Your child could not have had much strength of his own, and yet you say his wheat grew up and ripened."

"But that was so different. He never had such rocks and stones placed in his field as I have had."

"In the King's Book, which is now open before me, the Prince, His Son, says there is more joy in the eternal kingdom over one subject who returns to the cultivation of

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his field, than over ninety-and-nine who have never left theirs. Does not this encourage you?"

She shook her head.

"At any rate, Esther, will you try? Follow me, if you can, whilst I pray to the great King for you."

Agatha knelt down and prayed that strength might be given to the poor worn-out sufferer to find her field, and, though late, to cultivate her wheat. As she prayed, I could see by Esther's lips that she followed every word. As Agatha finished, she said—

"I will try. O Lord, help me!"

A few days later I saw the two women in a deserted field not far off. Stones and rocks were heaped in every direction.

"Now, Esther, be of good courage," said Agatha, in a cheerful tone. "All these will soon disappear. You must work hard, and no one shall molest you. I can help you so far, that I can keep away those who would hinder

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you; and I can also pray to the great King to make your work easy."

The poor, miserable, heart-broken woman, who had gone through so many trials and so much suffering, set to work in earnest in her field. The labour was really hard, but day after day it became easier, and I soon noticed a visible change. In a few weeks all the rough stones were gone, and in places I could see the green corn springing up.

"Oh, there is so much still to do," said Esther one day; "but I feel so happy while I work; and when I fix my thoughts on the great King and that happy land where my child is, the labour appears much lightened. Some portions are much more difficult to cultivate than others; I suppose that is because the stones have been there so much longer."

"Ah, Esther, I hope and pray your child is no longer lost to you—not lost, but gone before."

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That night when they reached home Esther seemed much worse, and begged Agatha not to leave her.

"All day long," she said, "I have fancied I heard my boy saying—'Mother, you will follow me, will you not?' Can it be a good sign? Perhaps the angel is coming, and though my wheat is so green he will carry me away. Oh, but I tremble when I think what the King may say to my wheat."

All through the night Agatha watched by the bedside whilst the poor sufferer tossed about. At last a marked change came over her, and she cried out—

"Cannot you come with me, Agatha? Do not leave me. I feel the angel is coming, but I cannot see his face yet. I dare not go alone with him. You must come with me."

Agatha said nothing to her, but knelt down and prayed earnestly that the great King would be merciful to her, and help her to bear the journey she so much dreaded, yet must

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take alone. Gradually she grew calmer, and ceased her entreaties to Agatha to accompany her.

"I should not mind," she gasped at slow intervals, "if I knew the good angel was going to carry me away. But oh! can the great King overlook my neglected wheat? Can He pardon such as I am?"

For a time all was quiet; then she suddenly started up, crying—

"Oh, Agatha, pray to Him for me. Oh, Father, be merciful to me."

Her wheat was reaped, and very green it was. Agatha could not see if the angel looked kindly at Esther. She could only know that the poor miserable woman, worn out with the cares and sorrows of the world she had loved so much, was taken away. She could not tell whither she was taken, but still she knew and had read so much of the King's mercy, that she could not help feeling almost certain that the joy of having rescued one

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of His subjects from the Wicked One was hers.

Darker than night, life's shadows fall around us,
And like benighted men we miss our mark;
God hides Himself, and Grace hath scarcely bound us,
Ere Death finds out his victims in the dark.

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CHAPTER V.

Grant us, dear Lord, from evil ways
True absolution and release,
And bless us more than in past days
With purity and inward grace.
Through life's long day and death's dark night,
O, gentle Jesus, be our light.

"Let us not be weary in well doing; for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."—*Gal.* vi. 9.

I was anxious to see what was Agatha's occupation now she no longer had Esther to nurse and attend to. I soon found out that she spent her time in going about in the crowded thoroughfares of the great city; always doing good, always trying to lead back to the great King all who came under her special notice. I found, too, there were many good men and women engaged in the same pursuit. Some gave themselves up, like Agatha, entirely to the

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good work; others who were obliged to attend to their various trades, still seemed to find time to do good to those around them. I had been hasty in condemning all who lived in the city as neglecting their King. Certainly, in a large city like the one I had visited, the Wicked One held out many more temptations than he did in the country, where at every step you were reminded of the goodness and power of Him who had made all so fair and beautiful for His subjects.

I often followed Agatha in her daily rounds. I could tell you of numberless acts of kindness performed by her to all with whom she came in contact. She would encourage those who were struggling back to their fields, quoting passages from the King's Book to cheer them. To the sick she was always tender and affectionate, nursing them as if they were her own children. To every living being that came in her way she tried to do some good.

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One evening Agatha was returning home, when a little girl ran out of a small house not far from her own, and begged her to come in to see a poor man who was very ill. She did not hesitate a moment, but, quickly retracing her steps, she entered the house, which was small, and the people to whom it belonged seemed very poor. Agatha was soon at the sick man's bedside, doing all she could to ease his pain; and through the long night she remained with him, cooling his parched lips and bathing his aching head. I also watched. The morning was breaking when I saw Agatha start and fall on her knees in prayer. I looked to see what had caused her to do this so suddenly, when I beheld the angel at the door of the room. But how different he appeared to what he was when I had seen him fetch old Gabriel away! His face seemed dark with anger, his sickle appeared like a flame of fire. I felt sure that the man who lay before us must have neglected his field, and that the

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angel had come to deliver him over to the Wicked One. He approached the bed-side and was preparing to touch the sick man, when suddenly he vanished. I was astonished, and looked round to see if Agatha had witnessed his departure. She was still praying earnestly, and I could hear her beseeching the great King, that if the poor man's wheat was not ripe, he would stay the angel's hand. The great King had answered her prayer. The angel was gone, and towards morning there was a marked change in the invalid. The room had been dark, and I had taken little notice of him, but what was my astonishment when on looking close at him I felt sure I knew his face. Surely I must be mistaken. I looked again, but it was not until I had heard him speak that I felt sure it was Christian. The same Christian, who when last I saw him, not very long ago, was a fine handsome young man, now looked old and haggard. Alas! it was pitiful to

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look at him. This, then, was the end of his saying he would return and cultivate his wheat after a short rest! How nearly had he been removed to where he would have no more chance of cultivating it!

Poor Agnes, if she could see her brother now! She too, no doubt, had never ceased praying to the King for him.

Days passed by, and the sick man slowly regained strength. When Agatha thought he was fit to bear it, she talked to him of the King, and when he confessed that he had neglected his field, she quietly told him how the angel had entered the door, and the King had even then called him back. The King was indeed most merciful, and would no doubt give him time to cultivate his wheat if he began at once to do so. Would He stop the angel a second time? Ah, no! Surely, Christian, after experiencing so much goodness and forbearance at His hands, would not tempt His loving-kindness again.

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After a while her good words seemed to take effect upon him, as I heard him promising to return to his field, and I left them, satisfied that Agatha would do her utmost to help him to carry out his good intentions.

I have lingered long over my recollections of Agatha. I could go on for hours relating her many deeds of charity. Young and old seemed to love and appreciate her, and were ever blessing her for all she did for them. Her sweet face will ever dwell in my memory. We must leave her, however, feeling sure that when the angel comes for her, she will be taken to that happy land where she so longs to be.

"It is their prayers, which never cease,
That clothe her with such grace;
Their blessing is the light of peace
That shines upon her face."

LONGFELLOW.

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CHAPTER VI.

Far better should they sleep awhile
 Within the church's shade,
Nor wake until new heav'n, new earth,
Meet for their new immortal birth,
 For their abiding place be made,

Than wander back to life, and lean
 On our frail love once more.
'Tis sweet, as year by year we lose
Friends out of sight, in faith to muse
 How grows in Paradise our store.

"He that walketh uprightly, walketh surely."—*Prov.* x. 9.

I was becoming anxious to return and see how Agnes was getting on during our absence. So we left the city, with its strange mixture of good and evil, and passed again through the lovely country to the place where she

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lived. As I expected, we found Agnes in her field, not working, indeed, for there seemed to me hardly any work to be done. The corn had sprung up and had already changed colour; in a very short time it would, I could see, be quite ready for harvest.

"Happy Agnes," thought I; "after all her toil and labour, how well is she rewarded! She is now counting the hours for the angel to come and bear her to that happy land where there will be endless happiness for her."

Agnes herself was very much changed. Her face was thin and pale, but there was a quiet happy look on it there had not been since her great grief in losing her brother. Her white garment, too, seemed whiter than ever. The spots she had cried over so bitterly were no longer to be seen. She was preparing to go home, when I saw approaching the good old general who had talked to her so kindly once before.

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"It is a long while since I last saw you, my child," said he, "but I know your time has been well occupied. I would, indeed, there were more like you, Agnes, who make their King's will their delight."

"Oh, sir," exclaimed Agnes, "but for you, what would my field be like now? It was you who instructed me how to sow the wheat; told me how I should watch it; and then, when I was elated by my success, told me to humble myself, and not trust, as I had done, in my own strength and power."

"I have told the same, and given the same instructions, to so many who have turned a deaf ear to me," replied the good old man with a sigh, "that it is a pleasure to come and look at your field. I can see the day is not far off when you will be rewarded for all your patience and labour by the good angel coming for you. I suppose you have heard nothing of Christian?"

"No, but I am always hoping he will some

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day return to me. Daily I pray that it may be so, and before I am taken away. I am sure if he were once to separate from his wicked companions he would listen to me, and return to his field. Oh, sir, if he comes back when I am gone, you will watch over him and do all you can for him, will you not? Tell him my constant prayers and thoughts were for him, and that we might one day be united in that happy land where I am going so quickly."

"For his own sake as well as yours, Agnes, you may depend upon my doing all I can for him. Let us, however, still hope he may return before you go."

Day after day I could see Agnes was always watching as if she expected some one. At the sound of a footstep she would start up and run to see who it was, but she was always to be disappointed. Her field of wheat was now nearly ripe, and looked, as the sun shone on it, like shining gold. She was quietly watching

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it one evening, when I saw a poor man slowly bending his steps towards her. He had evidently walked a very long distance, as his clothes were all dusty and stained with mud. His shoes were nearly falling off his feet; and his face and whole demeanour told a sad tale of want and misery. He had got quite close to Agnes before she perceived him. Suddenly she turned round, and found herself face to face with the stranger. To my astonishment, without an instant's hesitation, she flung her arms round his neck, and cried—

"Oh, Christian, my brother. I knew you would come back to me at last; but so late, so late! I cannot stay with you now."

No one but his sister would have recognised in the wretched-looking man the handsome youth who had left his field a few years ago; but she who had watched and waited for his return knew him at once, and was rejoiced to think she was allowed the happiness of again seeing him. She led him home carefully,

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attended to all his wants, and at last saw him fall into a quiet sleep, after having told her of his sufferings and the mercies of the great King towards him.

But Agnes was not long to enjoy the pleasure of watching over and caring for her brother.

The good old general, hearing her prayer had been answered, and that Christian had returned, hastened to see him. It was the evening following the wanderer's return, and he found them both sitting in Agnes's field.

"I am so glad you are come," said she. "I have been telling Christian I must leave him, for I know it is the good King's pleasure to call me away, and for myself I cannot but rejoice. Poor Christian will miss me very much; and he has up-hill work before him. He has promised me he will never leave off labouring in his field until he has cleared away every stone from it; then I know the wheat will spring up fresh and strong, and when it

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is ripe he will come to that happy land where I shall be waiting for him. But you must help him, sir, and cheer him when his heart sinks at the weight of the stones he has to lift. I do wish I could move those heavy ones for him before I go. They would feel so light to me; but of course it cannot be."

"Oh, Agnes, you must not go," sobbed Christian. "How can I work without you? Oh, why did I not return home before?"

"Christian," said Agnes, "we must submit to whatever is the King's will without repining.

"If Thou shouldst call me to resign
What most I prize; it ne'er was mine,
I only yield Thee what is Thine—
Thy will be done.

"Think of these words. Pray to the King unceasingly whilst you are at work; be always thanking Him for His mercy in having saved you from the Wicked One, and having given you time to cultivate your field. I could do nothing for

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you if I remained, but pray for you. All the labour you must do yourself. And you," continued she, turning to the old general, "who have been so kind to us both ever since the day we received the precious seed, will watch over my brother, and give him good instructions. Christian, if you will only love the King, and do what He has commanded, the time will pass quickly away, and then what will be your reward? To dwell for ever in that happy land where you will have no labour, no temptations, no parting from those you love; where all will be joy and peace in the service of the King for evermore.

"O Paradise, O Paradise,
Who doth not crave for rest?
Who would not seek the happy land
Where they that loved are blest?
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

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"O Paradise, O Paradise,
I greatly long to see
The special house my dearest Lord
Is furnishing for me.
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight.

"O Paradise, O Paradise,
I feel 'twill not be long:
Patience, I almost think I hear
Faint fragments of the song.
Where loyal hearts and true
Stand ever in the light,
All rapture through and through,
In God's most holy sight."

The trio had been walking towards the cottage whilst Agnes was talking; she, I saw, was very weak, and was almost carried by her brother.

"Come in with us," she said to the general; "I want to watch the last rays of the setting sun."

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So they placed her in a chair near the window, and Christian seated himself by her side, holding her hand. In silence she watched the sun till it had quite disappeared, and then slowly said—

"How beautiful all is here! how much more beautiful must everything be in our Father's eternal kingdom! The next sun that I shall see will never set. Oh, Christian, love the great King with all your heart; never forget His mercy and goodness; trust in Him, whatever happens to you, and He will not forsake you. I know the angel is coming for me, but do not wish to keep me, dear brother. It is such happiness to think I am going home to peace and bliss after years of toil and sorrow."

No one spoke. The general and Christian were both weeping bitterly. Agnes looked so happy; she had such trust and confidence in the great King, she did not appear to dread the lonely journey in the least. Presently she

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seemed to sleep, and the two men still watched. At last she opened her eyes and said, so low that they could hardly catch the words—

"May our King and Father bless you; I know He will."

She turned her eyes upwards and smiled so sweetly, for the angel was quietly descending, carrying the golden wheat he had just reaped. Her face beamed with kindness and pleasure, and as the angel touched her, she faintly murmured—

"My Father, I am ready."

Those who watched hid their faces, for they knew the angel had carried her away.

Oh, not in cruelty, not in wrath,
The reaper came that day;
'Twas an angel visited the earth
And took the flower away.

Some time elapsed before I again passed by the fields of the brother and sister I had watched so closely. I was anxious to see if Christian had carried out his good intentions,

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and I was glad to find him working hard. A very long time it must have taken him to remove the large stones which had accumulated on the land; hard work indeed, and constant and increasing watching were necessary. Christian seemed to know this, and toiled on early and late with a stern sad face, very different from the cheerful countenance Agnes had worn whilst at her work. One could see his was not yet a labour of love. Still the work progressed, and after a short time I could see the wheat had in many places begun to spring up. Then for the first time since his return I heard him break forth into a joyous song of praise to the great King who had been so merciful to him, and I left him, feeling assured that if he only continued in the way he had so lately begun, he would at last reach that happy land where Agnes was no doubt anxiously longing for his arrival.

I was tired with all my wanderings, and

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sat down to think over all I had seen in this strange land, and the one thought that ever kept recurring to my mind was, how these people could disobey a King so good and loving as the one who ruled over them; who gave with such an unsparing hand, and who asked so little in return!

Whilst I was marvelling over these things I awoke.

THE END.

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